

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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NCC CHURCH SCHOOL DEPT. - plans for World SS Convention

The second National Trustee meeting of the NCC Church School Department met at the Christian Center in Tokyo Oct. 20th with 45 members coming from as far as Hokkaido and Kyushu. The main topic of discussion was the plans for the 14th World Sunday School Convention which will be held in Tokyo the summer of 1958.

This Convention will be held in July or August of 1958 and will include four days of the International Board of Directors Meeting, three days for the Central Committee meeting, two weeks for a Christian Education Study Institute, and the World Convention for a week or ten days.

2500 guests are expected from abroad and 2000 delegates are expected to attend from Japan. In order to put on a convention for these expected 4500 people, the budget expected to be raised in Japan is ¥25,000,000.

Dr. Nelson Chapell, the General Secretary of the home office of the World Council of Christian Education is coming to Japan on December 10th to help make advance preparation for the forthcoming Convention.

It was also decided at the meeting of the Board of Trustees that the theme for the National Sunday School Convention to be held in Hiroshima next May 3 will be "Christ, the Way".

KYODAN PLANS - a history, two memorials and lay evangelism

The National Executive Board and the Central Executive Committee of the Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan (United Church of Christ of Japan), met on October 10th and decided:

1) To compile and publish a history of the Kyodan, going back to the first beginnings of the thirty some former denominations which make up the present Kyodan. This will be in the nature of a memorial for the forthcoming Hundred Years celebration of Christian evangelism in Japan. The Kyodan itself was organized in June 1941 and included almost all of the Protestant Churches in Japan. After the war several denominations withdrew and many new groups started but still the Kyodan has within it the churches of more than 30 former denominations and more than 50% of the Protestant Christians in the country.

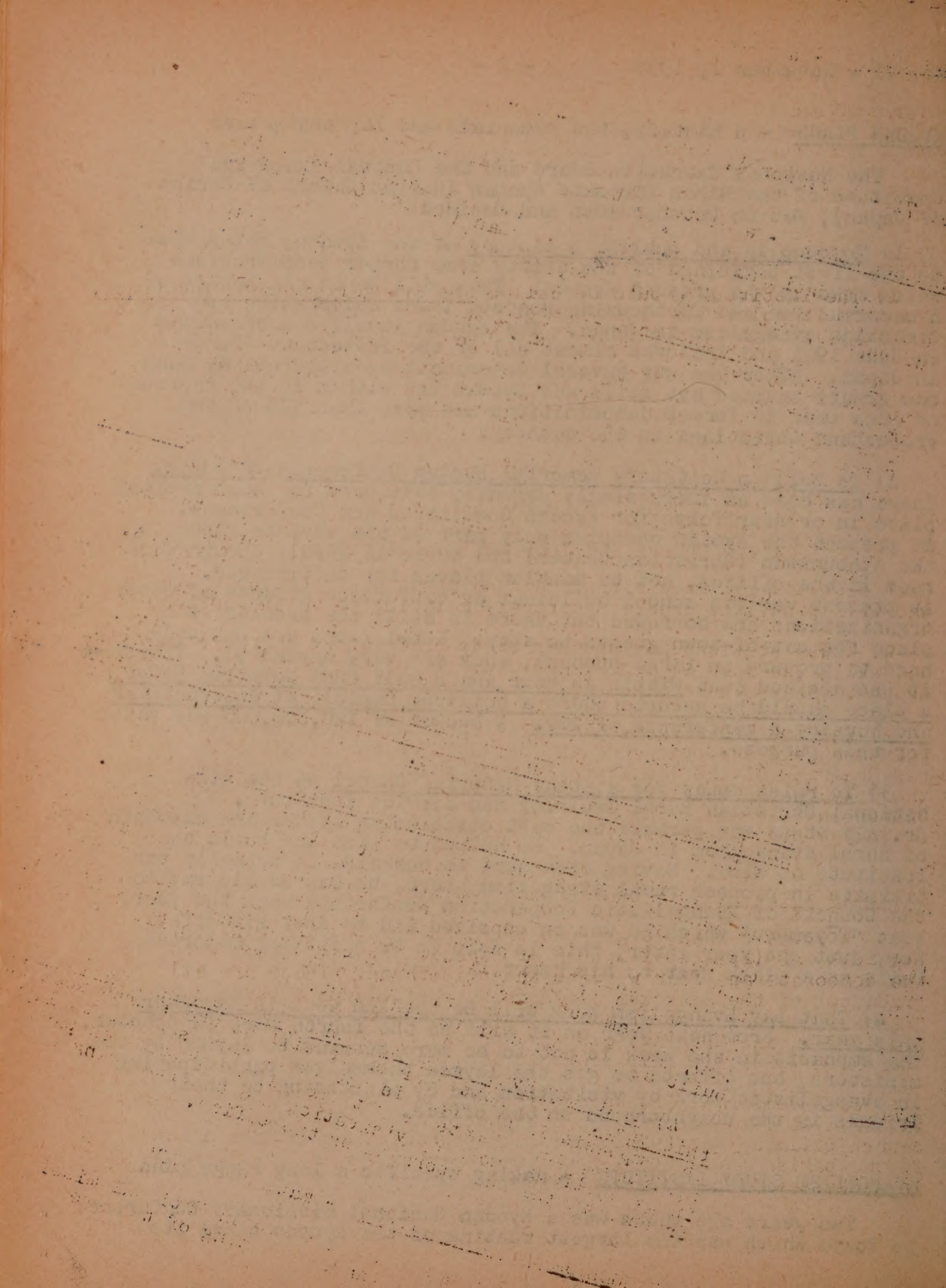
2) To build a Centenary Memorial Kyodan Conference Building. There has been an increasingly urgently felt need for some meeting place in or near Tokyo for Kyodan Committees and Conferences. At present the Kyodan occupies only part of the seventh floor in the Kyobunkwan (Christian Center) and there is hardly enough desk room in the offices, not to mention places for conferences. At present various school buildings or conference grounds of other organizations are borrowed but there is still the problem of a place for out-of-town guests to stay. Hotel rooms are not only hard to procure in large numbers, they are very expensive. Therefore it was decided that within an hour and a half from downtown Tokyo, a place should be secured where a building capable of entertaining and housing a conference of 200. A budget of ¥20,000,000 was voted for this purpose.

3) To raise money for a Stone Memorial Chapel at the Hino National Christian Rural Training and Service Institute. Dr. Alf Stone was perhaps the most outstanding leader and advocate of Rural Evangelism in Japan. He helped to plan and build the Institute at Hino. Having been sent to Hokkaido to actually participate in pioneer rural evangelism there, he was on his way to the Council of Evangelistic Cooperation Conference when the ferry boat "Tōyamaru" which he was on capsized and he lost his life. Now, just one year later, this is felt to be a fitting memorial built at a place dear to his heart.

4) That Lay Evangelism Week will be the 2nd week in November this year. From next year on it will be the fourth week in October. The emphasis in the week is not to be more sermons to laymen by the ministers, but efforts to get the laymen themselves participating in evangelistic work by visitation and by witnessing to their friends in the neighborhood or the office.

EVANGELISM STUDY INSTITUTE - making specific a long range plan

Two years ago there was a Kyodan National missionary Conference in Tokyo which was the largest meeting of the Kyodan since its



organization in 1941. Representatives and pastors from almost all of the member churches were there. There they decided that there was a need for an institute to study the theology of the church and the evangelistic task of the church. The 8th biannual General Meeting of the Kyodan last fall decided to act on this recommendation and made provisions for setting up such an institute. To this end they appointed a twelve member Preparatory Study Commission. This Commission has now come forward with specific recommendations.

1) The institute should be called the Evangelism Study Institute. The term "theology" is left out of the name because it is felt that theology is both prerequisite to and implied in the term "Evangelism".

2) The Institute office will be set up within the Kyodan Office at the Christian Center.

3) There will be five sections or study committees:

- a) The Theology of Evangelism
- b) The Strategy of Evangelism
- c) The Church and Education
- d) The Church and the Community
- e) The Church and International Affairs

Each section will have a Chairmen and about ten committee members who will study the problems directly relating to their section.

4) These sections may sponsor study conferences on their own and will also meet in conference with all of the other sections in order to share their thinking.

5) The Institute was actually started this month with the appointment and acceptance of the officers of the Institute. The new Chairman of the Institute is Rev. Tokuzo Hiraga, Professor of the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary and Pastor of Momijizaka Church in Yokohama. The Secretary is Rev. Kazo Kitamori, Professor of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary.

SEIKOKAI ACTIVITIES - ordinations and dedications

On October 28th, eight men were ordained to the ministry of the Seikokai (Episcopal Church of Japan). Four of these were to the diaconate and four were to the priesthood. These are all graduates of the Seikokai Seminary which includes a three year post graduate course. One of these students was married on the 10th, ordained on the 28th and has gone to the rectorate of All Saints Church in Tokyo...a full schedule for one month!

On November 3, "Bunka no Hi" (Culture Day) All Saints Church in Tokyo will consecrate its new church building. The previous church building was burned and the congregation has been meeting in the parish house until now. On November 20th, St. Johns Church in Asakusa will be dedicated also.

CHRISTIAN BROADCASTERS CONFER - sixteen programs pool ideas

On Friday, September 30, twenty representatives of eleven organizations which are producing Christian radio broadcasts in Japan met for three hours at the Christian Audio Visual Center at Aoyama College. This group, including 12 Japanese and 8 missionaries, now producing about sixteen programs for regular broadcast weekly on various stations scattered across Japan, heard five minute reports on each group's program, the stations broadcasting it and the kind and scope of follow-up activities. Following this there was a period of questions and free discussion. The group decided a tightly united organization was unnecessary, but agreed to meet twice a year and to exchange followup literature and other information. Other possible future activities which were discussed included the founding of a central tape library of Christian music and of sound effects, and the possibility of exchanging technical information and joining together for mutual criticism of programs. The group tentatively took the name of Japan Christian Broadcasters Association. This was the first meeting of this sort to be held in Japan.

ALL LUTHERAN CONFERENCE - long term thinking and strategic immediate steps

On October 18-20 the All Lutheran Free Conference met in Kyoto for its annual meeting under the theme "Strength Through Weakness". As the name indicates this Conference bound no mission group to any particular obligations. It was so constructed as to be organizationally weak. Its purpose was merely to provide an atmosphere in which all the Lutheran groups might come together for spiritual fellowship, and at the same time find areas where cooperative work could take place.

In the past, the formation of the Lutheran Literature Society rose out of suggestions that originated in this Conference. Two years ago at this conference, proposals were made to start unity meetings. Committees have been hard at work studying Doctrinal and Organizational problems. A report was given at this year's Conference concerning the unity proceedings. (see JCAN 5/1/55 p.3 and 5/15/55 p.3) Feelings among the missions run from the optimistic: "All that remains to be done is to draw up articles of agreement between each individual mission and the Japan Church"; to the pessimistic: "We are not doctrinally one, how can we have unity?".

Thus, although it will probably be some time before actual union is realised, at least one new suggestion for cooperative work came out of this year's meeting: a joint committee for use and purchase of Audio-visual Aid materials is to be established. Each member mission is to appoint a representative to this committee.

About 110 Lutheran missionaries, plus about 10 representatives from the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church attended the Conference. All twelve recognized Lutheran groups were represented.

BOTT MEMORIAL HOME - an investment in the next generation

Dr. G. E. Bott is remembered by many as the seemingly tireless worker who died "on the job" in 1951. Coming to Japan from Canada before the war, he helped in social work in many ways. After the war he came in the capacity of supervisor of the distribution of the famed "LARA" relief goods in Japan. His work made possible the comforting of much suffering in the post-war years.

As a memorial to him the Christian Children's Fund, Inc. with Japan offices in the Christian Center, is now building a model home for orphans in Setagaya-ku, Tokyo. The land is 1200 "tsubo" (c.21,000 sq. ft.) and the buildings will be about 210 "tsubo" (c.3,800 sq. ft.). There will be in addition to a central building, four "cottages" in which the children can live as a family with a house-mother. The Home is being built for 50 children at a cost of ¥15,000,000. It is to be a modern up-to-date institution which will serve as a model for Japanese orphanages.

It is to be finished in time for the children to move in for the new school year which opens in April. The children will be the ones who are now staying in the inadequate facilities of the "Airin Dan".

"THE BRONZE CHRIST" - movie of martyrs and a turncoat

In this land where Christianity has been a despised religion and Christians number less than 0.5% of the population, it is seldom that a Christian theme plays a major part in the mass communication media. "Seido no Kirisuto" (the bronze Christ) is a notable exception to this rule.

Produced by Shochiku, one of the main movie companies of Japan, "Seido no Kirisuto" is historically based. The action takes place in Kyushu during the early part of the 17th century when Shogun Iyeyasu has grown suspicious of this foreign religion which has grown by such leaps and bounds during the past fifty years under the sponsorship of foreign missionaries. Therefore Iyeyasu issues the notorious edict which bans Christianity and makes the Buddhist faith compulsory. During this period whole communities are forced to line up and one by one tread on "fumie" (Christian symbols which were to be stepped on) to show that they are either not Christians or have renounced Christianity. Those who refuse to thus symbolically "tread on Christ" are killed almost without exception.

During this reign of terror, one Portuguese priest by the name of Ferera who was an important leader in the infant Church, gave up his faith, adopted a Japanese name, Chuan Sawano, and actually became an officer for the Japanese government, contributing to medical and educational methods.

This historical happening is taken as the basis of a somewhat fanciful case study of a priest who cracks and falls under the pressure of torture. Although over-acted in parts, the sympathetic treatment of the spiritual and moral struggles of Ferera are sensitively done. Never does he become simply a "bad man" against the "good men", and even one of the "good men" falls ignominiously at the end.

The movie has been criticized as being "anti missionary" and some Roman Catholics have felt that it was not helpful for their Church members to see. But there has been no official banning by the Roman Catholic Church in this country. To be sure, there are certain technical mistakes in the picture (choir boys in white surplices singing loudly in a supposedly clandestine Christmas mass under persecution; the priest's cassock being of the wrong pattern for his time and station). But the witness of the Christians who gladly go to the cross rather than renounce their faith is a stirring sight; the struggles of the priest reminds us how the strongest of us not only can but constantly do fall in lesser ways; and the glorious story of the early Christians' martyrdom in this country is one that deserves being told.

Plans are being made for the movie to be sent abroad to be shown with foreign titles to tell the story. Plans are also under way in the Roman Catholic Church to produce a picture treating the same period.

COMING EVENTS

November 6 - 13 Week-long celebration to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the YWCA. The following events are scheduled at the Tokyo YWCA building: 6th, 2 PM movies on Hygiene; 7th, 6 PM movies on Hygiene; 9th, 6 PM movies on Mountain climbing; 10th 6 PM A forum on "the Life of a Businesswoman"; 11th, 7-10 PM, Exhibition on International Dancing; 12 7 PM Play, "If You Look at the Sky"...a play by the YWCA Drama group. In addition to this, from the 4th to 10th there will be on display the picture-story series on "the Life of a Woman".

November 26 - December 25 "Hymn Time" is a special series of daily broadcasts centering around the new hymnbook, sponsored by the Japan Christian literature Society and the Hymnal Committee of the United Church and produced by AVACO. The program, to be called, "Hymn Time", will include the presentation of one hymn by a choir, quartette or soloist and its interpretation by a prominent Japanese pastor. Broadcast over Nippon Hoso (Japan Broadcasting Company) in the Tokyo area, the program will be from 6:20 to 6:25 a.m. on weekdays and from 6:00 on Sundays.

